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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
- - -  
BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

JAN 16 1953

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S *21*

FROM: EUR - C. Burke Elbrick *38*

SUBJECT: Detention of Berlin Military Trains

The United States military trains between Berlin and the Federal Republic during the night of 14-15 January were detained as a result of the refusal of the Soviet officer at the Marienborn checkpoint to clear the trains unless he could stamp each individual travel order of the passengers and American crew members. The Soviet officer also refused to allow the trains to return to their points of origin. Such stamping would be a departure from existing procedures, and the train commanders refused to comply. In the case of one train the Soviet officer surreptitiously stamped the travel orders. The train commander protested vehemently. The other three trains were eventually cleared without any stamping of orders but only after many hours delay.

The Chief of Staff of our Berlin Command telephoned a protest to the Soviet Deputy Commandant in Berlin against this unprecedented procedure immediately after the first train was detained. Subsequent attempts to contact the Soviet Deputy Commandant were unsuccessful.

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Similar Soviet demands were made to the commanders of the one French and the one British train. The French train commander acceded, apparently because he had been inadequately briefed; the British train commander allowed the stamping of travel orders only as a last resort and under protest.

The Soviet Commandant at Marienborn had proposed to American military officers during a meeting December 11, 1957 that Soviet stamps similar to those heretofore placed on the travel orders of Allied official personnel proceeding via the Berlin-Helmstedt highway

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also be placed on the travel orders of train travelers. He said he wished to introduce this procedure to prevent orders from being used for more than one round-trip. The Embassy at Bonn decided that no action should be taken on the Soviet proposal unless it was repeated at a different level or an attempt was made to enforce it.

Our Embassy at Bonn has reported that, in the wake of this incident, the British and French have agreed to follow our lead in refusing to accept Soviet stamping of travel orders.

Concurrence:

GER - J. J. Reinstein

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